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NUTRITION COMMITTEE NEWS

For exchange of information on nutrition education and school lunch activities.

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, Washington, D. C.

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COOPERATION SPARKS SUCCESS IN SCHOOL LUNCH, SCHOOL MILK

The substantial progress made last year in getting more milk and better school lunches to more children gives testimony to the effectiveness of the combined work of communities, States, and the Federal Government.

Chief responsibility for success of the School Lunch Program rests with the individual school and community. The nature of their support varies as much as the types and sizes of the schools. It may start with the local school officials or with such groups as the Parent Teachers' Associations, a mothers' club, a service organization or—in the case of the Special School Milk Program, a local dairy. In sum, the cooperators add up to a local roster of those interested in the health and well-being of children.

A few communities now operate successful school lunch programs on their own. Others are in a position to finance the service of well-balanced low-cost lunches but look to

the State educational agency for guidance on ways of better utilizing the school lunch program in nutrition and health education courses. Many other communities rely upon States for some food assistance for their school lunch program.

At this point the Department of Agriculture enters the school lunch picture. Through State educational agencies, the Department, authorized by the Congress under the National School Lunch Act of 1946, provides the following types of food assistance to schools operating nonprofit lunch programs: First, cash payments to schools for local purchase of foods; second, food commodities purchased especially for the program or donated from supplies acquired under marketing stabilization programs; and third, technical assistance on food purchase, use, and management.

NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM

The close of the 1954-55 school year completed the ninth year of operation of the National School Lunch Program. In 1947, the first year of operation under the National School Lunch Act, about 6,000,000 children participated. Since then, there has been steady year-to-year growth in number of children participating, quality of meals served, and amount of food used.

During 1954-55, approximately 11,000,000 children in 59,000 schools were served 1,800,000,000 meals. On the average, participating children ate 164 meals at school. About 80 percent were complete Type A meals served at an average cost to the child of 23 cents. Of the total number of meals served about 9.5 percent were served free or at a reduced price to children who were unable to pay full price.

This issue of NCN has been prepared by the Food Distribution Division of the USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service.

Local Food Purchases

Last year schools participating in the program spent a total of about \$323,000,000 for local food purchases. Funds from State and local sources, including payments by children for their lunches, made up approximately \$254,000,000 of this total. The remainder—a little over \$69,000,000 represented Federal assistance in the form of cash payments. Thus, for each Federal food dollar, over 3 additional dollars from State and local funds and from participants were used to purchase food for school lunches.

U. S. D. A. Donated Foods

The donation of foods acquired by the Department under its price support and surplus removal programs, as well as food purchased specifically for the National School Lunch Program with a part of the annual school lunch appropriation, contribute materially to the service of low-cost, well-balanced lunches. Local communities and States cooperate in these efforts by arranging and financing a system whereby foods are delivered to local schools, after

Department of Agriculture has shipped them to receiving centers within each State.

During 1954-55 approximately \$13,000,000 was spent for food purchased specifically for the School Lunch Program. Purchases were made to provide additional foods important for protein and vitamins A and C, thus helping schools meet program requirements and add to the nutritive value of meals. Foods purchased included canned citrus and tomato products, canned peaches, canned vegetables, and peanut butter.

In addition foods acquired under the price support and surplus removal programs were distributed to schools. These donated foods included butter, cheese, nonfat dry milk solids, cottonseed oil and shortening, canned beef and gravy, dry beans, rice, canned cranberry sauce, canned figs, and honey.

Plentiful Foods

To help schools make the best use of funds available for food purchase, the Department, working through State educational agencies, furnishes schools with a "special" list of foods in plentiful supply each month. Foods are selected on the basis of nutritional contribution and usability in school lunches. Plentiful foods representing good buys help schools make the most of their food dollars.

State educational agencies tell schools about plentiful foods through regular monthly newsletters or special releases. To help schools take full advantage of the good food buys, States provide recipes and menus featuring plentiful foods and encourage schools to serve them in new, interesting ways.

Meeting Type A Meal Pattern

Results of an extensive survey undertaken in 1952-53 by the Department and State and local school lunch personnel led to a recommendation that school lunch managers and cooks needed additional informational materials on how best to use the type A meal pattern in planning well-balanced and appetizing school lunches. The Department developed such materials and distributed them in the school year 1953-54.

These informational materials include the following:

1. A guide "Planning Type A School Lunches" which explains the steps involved in developing type A school lunches and provides sample menus of the type A pattern.

2. Visual material which emphasizes use of more foods high in vitamin A and C—two nutrients most frequently short in school lunches as revealed by the survey. Material entitled "Let's Have More Vitamin A and C Foods in School Lunches" was developed in color in the form of easel displays, filmstrips, and slides for use at workshops.

A script which highlights the major points to be covered aids school lunch personnel in presenting this material.

3. A list of foods which are good sources of vitamins A and C, with recommendations to serve one of these vitamin C foods every day and one of the vitamin A foods at least twice a week.

4. Selected USDA school lunch recipes which show the amount of vitamins A and C each provides.

5. Special releases on vitamins A and C and on meeting the overall nutritional needs of children for use by States in school conferences, workshops, and newsletters.

The materials distributed throughout the United States (including Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands) have undoubtedly contributed to the improved quality of lunches. Current reports indicate that foods important for vitamins A and C are being served more frequently. Reviews of lunches, as served, reveal considerable improvement in food combinations, in method of food preparation, and in variety of food served. However, continued emphasis is needed on a serving of a vitamin C food each day of the week because some schools are using more than one vitamin-C-rich food in some meals and none in other meals.

Food Buying Guide and Recipe Card File

To further aid schools in serving better type A lunches, the Agricultural Marketing Service and the Agricultural Research Service of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, and the Fish and Wildlife Service of the U. S. Department of the Interior, recently developed a comprehensive food buying guide for type A school lunches and a basic recipe card file.

The buying guide gives the approximate number of servings per purchase unit, the number of purchase units to serve 100, and additional information on yields for various foods. Estimates of amounts to buy are based on the best available information including recent data obtained at various institutions under actual feeding conditions.

The recipe card file incorporates a number of new as well as previously published recipes which have been adjusted to conform with the new yield data in the buying guide. To increase the usefulness of the file, variations have been given for a number of the recipes, and carefully selected type A menus have been provided on the back of the card for each protein-rich recipe.

Planning and Equipping the Lunchroom

At the request of the Area Advisory Committees on Practical Research, composed of State School Lunch Supervisors, the Department is currently developing a guide for

planning and equipping school lunchrooms. The guide will incorporate and expand information contained in several equipment publications previously issued by the Department. The Committees felt that there was a pressing need for this publication because of the big school construction program now underway. In line with the Committees' recommendation, the publication will include information on location, space, and features of construction for each work area in the lunchroom. General guides will be given also for large and small equipment for various sized meal loads. In addition, there will be a section on efficient layout of space and equipment and a checklist for evaluating school lunch facilities.

Distribution of Publications

As publications become available, they are distributed free to individual schools through State educational agencies. Other interested groups may purchase most of them from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington 25, D. C. Recipes type A school lunches, PA-271, a set of 184 (5" x 8") cards containing 400 recipes, is now available at \$2.25 per set.

SPECIAL SCHOOL MILK PROGRAM

Despite continuing increase in participation, the National School Lunch Program still falls short of reaching its full potential. The 11,000,000 participants in the 1954-55 program represent about one-third of the children in elementary and secondary schools.

Last year, the Special School Milk Program was started in an effort to reach more children in school, and provide them with more milk. The program is designed to increase milk consumption by school children by: (1) making it possible for more schools to serve milk; (2) encouraging a larger percentage of children to drink milk in schools already serving milk; and (3) permitting children already drinking milk to drink more, if they so desire.

Experimental Operations

During development of the Special School Milk Program, the USDA consulted with the Secretary's advisors on the National School Lunch Program and representatives of the dairy industry. A recommendation from this group led to reserving \$500,000, from funds available for fiscal year 1955, for experimental operations to be done in cooperation with State educational agencies administering the program in the States.

To date, the USDA has agreements in 17 States on 10 types of experimental projects. Because milk availability and consumption differ among States and among schools within a State, each cooperating State educational agency

has been encouraged to take a large part in developing its State study. This is indicated in the following summaries of experiments that State agencies have made.

When? how often? Kentucky and New Mexico studied the effect on total and per child consumption of school milk when it is served at times other than the noon hour and more often than once a day. Problems of milk supply and service created by the changes were evaluated and solutions sought.

What price? Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Wisconsin tested responses to several levels of price per unit of milk (other than milk served with the type A lunch). Milk consumption at these prices and at the higher ones paid during the pretest period were compared.

Tennessee, Oregon, and Utah studied school variations in pricing milk. Among pricing policies evaluated for their effect on consumption were: Blended prices for all milk, special prices for extra milk, and slight reductions in price.

Milk vending machines. Rhode Island and Alabama investigated the influence of coin-operated milk vending machines on total and per child milk consumption. Study was made of types and capacities of machines, best spots in schools for machines, amortization and operating costs, maintenance problems, milk deliveries, and in-school milk service problems.

Plain milk? flavored milk? South Dakota evaluated the comparative appeal of plain and chocolate-flavored whole milk. Availability, price, and children's preferences were among the factors covered from the angle of school administrations, dairies, and children.

How cold? Georgia tackled in-school milk handling practices and their effect upon acceptability of milk to children. Schools selected for study represented these three practices of serving milk during the lunch period: (1) refrigerated dispenser, (2) refrigerated box, and (3) unrefrigerated serving area (for milk withdrawn from refrigerated storage).

Why do Mary and John drink school milk? New Jersey made a comprehensive study of the influence of temperature, price, availability of competitive products, fad diets, and home food habits upon school milk consumption. Relationships were determined by statistical analysis of school milk consumption records, visits to schools, and questionnaire surveys in selected schools.

Rural hurdles. Vermont gave attention to difficulties dairies meet in delivering milk in rural areas and how to minimize their effect. Poor roads, excessive distances between dairies and schools, and inadequate refrigeration were considered.

School milk + home milk = how much? Louisiana investigated the effect of the special milk program on school, home, and total milk consumption of children. Schools in surplus and deficit milk areas were studied. Schools not participating in the program served as controls.

What deters school participation? Wyoming evaluated the reasons which schools gave for not coming into the program and sought ways to get around them. Reasons for nonparticipation were asked of schools participating in the Type A School Lunch Program and those not participating in the School Lunch Program.

How much milk per serving? per school day? In one of its cities New York State studied responses to (1) a third of a quart of milk instead of a half pint at lunch time, and (2) an extra half pint of milk at midmorning or midafternoon.

Progress in Distribution

During its first 7 months of operation on a nationwide basis, December 1954-June 1955, the Special School Milk Program was approved for operation in more than 47,000 schools. Over 7,600 schools were newly constructed or schools without a prior service of milk. Well over 400,000 additional half pints of milk were consumed by children during this period.

Toward the end of the first fiscal year, Department officials, watching the progress of the program, detected some opportunities for modification which might make the program more effective. As a result, the School Lunch Advisors to the Secretary of Agriculture and representatives of the dairy industry—the same group who had counseled on formation of the program—were called into Washington again. They met May 2-4, reviewed operation of the program in its first year, analyzed its strengths and weaknesses, and suggested improvements for the coming year.

Toward greater progress. As a result of information gained in this conference, Department officials announced, on June 16, some modifications in the Special School Milk Program for the 1955-56 year. These modifications are expected to encourage increased consumption more effectively and eliminate some operating problems that have limited the program's full development during the past school year. Broadly, the modifications are:

Next school year, participating schools will be reimbursed for all milk served to children as a "separate

item"—that is, in excess of the half pint that is served as part of a type A or B lunch under the National School Lunch Program.

State educational agencies will continue to be responsible for establishing rates of reimbursement for individual schools, within the maximum rates set by the Department of Agriculture. The maximum rate that the State may assign is 4 cents per half pint milk for schools serving type A and B lunches under the National School Lunch Program, and 3 cents per half pint for all other schools.

Provisions also will be made to insure that the Federal payments will materially lower the price of milk to children in participating schools as compared with prices that such schools would otherwise have to charge.

What schools are doing. School officials are finding many ways to increase the consumption of milk. Here are some typical examples:

Michigan has placed vending machines in the halls of many high schools. This makes milk available to students between classes and during recreation after school hours.

A Montana school offers to all children who finish their lunch a second serving of milk without charge. Each child is also offered another half pint of milk just prior to dismissal in the afternoon.

Thirty-six schools in a South Carolina County which were unable to obtain milk deliveries last year succeeded this year. The new program provided the extra incentive and interest that resulted in the local co-operation that solved the delivery problem.

A Texas elementary school leaves it to the homeroom teacher to decide when to serve the additional milk. One teacher has decided the best time is during the children's spelling lesson.

A Wisconsin school which formerly served milk only with the plate lunch is now offering milk to children at other times during the school day at 1 cent a half pint. A bulk dispensing machine is used, with the school's older students taking charge of the machine.

Thus, with initiative and imagination on the part of school administrators and teachers and cooperation of local dairy interests and other groups, more milk is being made available to more children in schools throughout the country.